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ABSTRACT

This study reports the results of a national survey concerning the current (1974) status of the certification of preschool teachers by each of the United States. Information was obtained from the certification officers of 47 states and the District of Columbia, each of whom answered a one-page questionnaire designed to ascertain: (1) how many states have certification requirements for preschool teachers of handicapped and nonhandicapped children; and (2) the credit hour and field experience requirements in those states having certification standards. Results of the survey are summarized in table form, and a brief discussion of the implications of the results is included. (ED)

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A NATIONAL SURVEY: CERTIFICATION OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

by

James E. Walker and Thomas M. Shea

Project Head-Start, initiated during the Johnson Administration, was an effort by the U. S. Federal Government to stimulate the development of community-based preschool programs. Head-Start and similar programs have made the majority of educators aware of the importance of "formal education" for young children. As a result, several early childhood education models have been conceptualized and implemented on an experimental basis during the past decade. The most outstanding, and potentially productive, of these models are The Engleman-Becker Model, The Cognitive Curriculum, The Behavior Analysis Model, The Open Education Model, The Tucson Early Education Model (TEEM), The Demonstration and Research Center for Early Education (DARCEE), The Bank Street Model and The Responsive Model.*

As a consequence of these demonstrations and research activities, not only educators but politicians, parents, and the general public have encouraged, sometimes demanded, preschool education for all children, both handicapped and non-handicapped.

Preschool programs in Special Education have been stimulated by grant funds from the U. S. Office of Education (the Handicapped Children's Early Education Assistance Act: P-L 90-538) and some

*The Projects are identified at the end of this article.

state educational agencies. Colleges and universities training special education personnel have been encouraged to expand their programs to include preschool teacher training. These activities have been financed by training grants from the U. S. Office of Education and some private foundations.

The Contemporary Certification Crisis

At the present time, State Teacher Certification Offices are establishing certification standards for preschool teachers. Concurrently, college and university administrators and faculties are implementing training programs for preschool teachers of the handicapped and non-handicapped children. Due to a lack of objective data on the effectiveness of existing preschool research and demonstration projects, it is difficult for either of these groups to identify, with precision, the knowledge and skills needed for quality preschool educational experiences for children. However, in many states preschool teacher certification requirements are being developed cooperatively by the colleges and universities personnel and the certification boards.

The individual states take considerable pride in maintaining high standards for certification in all areas of teaching. A cross-sectional analysis of certification requirements would probably reveal that most states indeed have established standards which identify quality teachers at several instructional levels and areas.

However, in many states preschool teacher certification requirements have not received the attention necessary to insure the training of quality teachers. Those few states which have standards for preschool teachers are vague in their requirements. Nearly all the states have ignored the establishment of standards for preschool teachers of the handicapped. In most cases a

"special education teaching certificate" or "kindergarten certificate" is accepted as evidence of one's ability to teach preschool handicapped and non-handicapped children.

The survey reported in this article was conducted to stimulate discussion and action in the establishment of preschool teacher certification standards, especially for preschool teachers of the handicapped. We have used the State of Illinois as an example because it is the only state in which preschool education for all handicapped children is mandatory.

The Illinois Problem

On July 7, 1972, the Illinois General Assembly Bills #322 and 323 became law. This legislation mandated special education services for all handicapped persons between the ages of three and twenty-one years. In effect, the law lowered the age at which it is mandatory for local school districts to provide special educational services from five to three years.

Special education program planners and administrators were confronted with the immediate problems of planning and initiating preschool services in all special education districts in the state. This included the problem of training and employing qualified and certifiable preschool teachers of the handicapped.

Some Illinois State and private colleges and universities have, as a result of the mandate, planned and initiated training programs for preschool special education personnel. At present, these training programs are based on a synthesis of traditional knowledge and skills needed by the preschool teacher of non-handicapped children and those needed by the special education teacher; rather than on the skills and knowledge unique to the functions of the preschool teacher of the handicapped.

The Illinois Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has a committee operating through the Office of the Illinois Certification Board to establish requirements and classifications for special education preschool teacher certification. Their task

is extremely difficult due to a near dearth of information relative to certification standards from federal, state, and university sources. At this writing, the State of Illinois has not been able to agree on certification standards for preschool teachers.

Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of this survey was to discern how many of the states have:

(1) Certification requirements for preschool teachers,

(2) Certification requirements for preschool teachers of the handicapped, and

(3) The credit hour and field experience requirements in those states having certification standards for preschool teachers of handicapped and non-handicapped children.

Procedures

A one-page survey questionnaire and cover letter were mailed to the Chief Certification Officer in each of the fifty states. and the District of Columbia in September, 1973. Within one month, forty questionnaires had been returned. In early November, 1973, a second questionnaire and letter were mailed to the ten State Certification Officers not responding to the initial request. By January, 1974, responses had been received from forty-seven states and the District of Columbia.

Results

The results of data analysis is summarized in Table I.

TABLE 1

States	Source of Information	Certification Requirements For Pre-School Teachers	Semester Hours Required For Pre-School Certification	Teaching Experience Required For Pre-School Certification	Certification Requirements For Teachers of Pre-School Handicapped Children
Alabama	No Response	-	-	-	-
Alaska	Survey Form	Yes	Completion of an approved College Program	Student Teaching	No
Arizona	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Arkansas	Survey Form	Yes	18	No	No
California	Survey Form	Yes	30	Yes	No
Colorado	Survey Form	Yes	Completion of an approved College Program	Determined by College Program	- No
Conneticut	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Delaware	Survey Form	Yes	90	No	No
Dist. of Columbia	Survey Form	Yes	18	Student Teaching or one year teaching experience	No
Florida	Survey Form	Yes	20	Yes	No
Georgia	Survey Form	Yes	75 quarter hours	Student Teaching	Yes Experimental Program
Hawaii	Survey Form	No	-	-	No

Table 1 - Continued

States	Source of Information	Certification Requirements For Pre-School Teachers	Semester Hours Required For Pre-School Certification	Teaching Experience Required For Pre-School Certification	Certification Requirements For Teachers of Pre-School Handicapped Children
Idaho	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Illinois	Survey Form	Yes	120	No	No
Indiana	Survey Form	Yes	46	No	No
Iowa	Survey Form	Yes	30	No	No
Kansas	Survey Form	Yes	74	Student Teaching	No
Kentucky	Survey Form	Yes	10	No	No
Louisiana	Survey Form	Yes	6	Student Teaching	No
Maine	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Maryland	Survey Form	Yes	Completion of an approved College Program	Student Teaching	No
Massachusetts	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Michigan	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Minnesota	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Mississippi	Survey Form	Yes	40	No	No
Missouri	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Montana	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Nebraska	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Nevada	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
New Hampshire	Survey Form	No	-	-	No

Table 1 - Continued

States	Source of Information	Certification Requirements For Pre-School Teachers	Semester Hours Required For Pre-School Certification	Teaching Experience Required For Pre-School Certification	Certification Requirements For Teachers of Pre-School Handicapped Children
New Jersey	Survey Form	Yes	24	No	No
New Mexico	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
New York	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
North Carolina	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
North Dakota	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Ohio	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Oklahoma	Survey Form	Yes	25	No	Yes
Oregon	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Pennsylvania	No Response	-	-	-	-
Rhode Island	No Response	-	-	-	-
South Carolina	Survey Form	Yes	87	Student Teaching	No
South Dakota	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Tennessee	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Texas	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Utah	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Vermont	Survey Form	Yes	Bachelors Degree plus 18	Yes	No
Virginia	Survey Form	No	-	-	No

Table 1 - Continued

States	Source of Information	Certification Requirements For Pre-School Teachers	Semester Hours Required For Pre-School Certification	Teaching Experience Required For Pre-School Certification	Certification Requirements For Teachers of Pre-School Handicapped Children
Washington	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
West Virginia	Survey Form	No	-	-	No
Wisconsin	Survey Form	Yes	Completion of an approved College Program	Student Teaching	No
Wyoming	Survey Form	Yes	Completion of two years of college	Yes	No

Analysis reveals the following factors:

1. Forms were completed and returned from 47 states and the District of Columbia.
   a. States not responding were:
      Alabama
      Pennsylvania
      Rhode Island
2. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have certification requirements for preschool teachers of the non-handicapped.
3. The requirements for certification of preschool teachers of the non-handicapped ranged from 6 to 120 semester hours. In some states this indicates the number of hours in preschool education; in others the hours represents a complete college program. Six of the responding states indicated that certification was dependent upon completion of an approved program. These approved programs ranged from 2 to 4 years of college training.
4. Thirteen of the responding states indicated that teaching experience and/or student teaching was required for certification.
5. Only two of the responding states (Georgia and Oklahoma) have certification requirements for teachers of preschool handicapped children.
   a. Georgia has an experimental certification program requiring 75 quarter hours. There was no indication

of the number of hours in special education or the teaching or student steaching experience required for certification.

b. Oklahoma requires 24 semester hours for certification of teachers of preschool handicapped children. They also require 24 semester hours in special education. It was not indicated whether the 24 hours for certification and the 24 hours in special education were the same hours. Oklahoma does not require teaching experience for certification of preschool teachers of the handicapped.

Discussion

The states committed to the education of preschool children generally agree that the certified preschool teacher should have a knowledge and skills in: (1) contemporary early childhood education models, (2) child development, including developmental deviations, (3) parent counseling, (4) physical and mental health (5) educational assessment and evaluation, (6) curriculum development, and (7) field experience with preschool children.

The special education preschool teacher should be familiar with contemporary early childhood models such as those listed on page one. The qualified preschool teacher must not only have an understanding of normal child development, but developmental deviations. He must be knowledgeable of the techniques applied in the remediation of these deviations. Teachers lacking knowledge

of child development can not deal effectively with the problems of handicapped children, nor even the common growth 2nd development problems of normal children.

Most preschool programs have traditionally encouraged parent involvement. Teachers need competency in parent education group discussion techniques, as well as individual parent-teacher conference techniques. Preschool teachers also need a understanding of physical and mental health. Personnel must identify deviations from the norm and, with assistance, implement remedial interventions.

As new testing techniques are developed and standardized, preschool personnel must be competent in administering and interpreting both child's assessment and program evaluations instruments. Teachers of preschoolers must have a high degree of competency in curriculum development and modification. Among the most important areas of the preschool curriculum are: (1) language development, (2) personal-social development, (3) perceptual development, (4) reading readiness, (5) arithmetic readiness, and (6) gross and fine motor development.

Most professional educators would agree that certified preschool personnel should have pre-service field experience with young children. It is desirable that special education preschool teachers have field experiences with both handicapped and non-handicapped children.

A Call to Action

The results of this survey prompts us to issue "a call to action" to all State Certification Boards, Teacher Training Institutions and The U. S. Office of Education.

It is a fact that classroom programs are being developed throughout the country for young children, both handicapped and non-handicapped. Therefore, it is urgent that responsible educators establish certification standards for preschool teachers of handicapped and non-handicapped populations. These standards should be developed as a result of the cooperative actions of the State Certification Officers and Teacher Training personnel. Their deliberations must be addressed to the following topics:

1. What knowledge and skill competencies are needed by the preschool teacher of the non-handicapped? Of the handicapped?
2. What pre-service field experiences are needed by the preschool teacher of the non-handicapped: Of the handicapped?
3. Are separate certification standards needed for preschool teachers of the non-handicapped and the handicapped?

This survey indicates that neither standards nor guidelines are available for training and certification of preschool teachers of handicapped and non-handicapped?

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROJECTS

The Engleman-Becker Model
Project Directors: Siegfried Engelman and Wesley Becker
Department of Special Education
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403

The Cognitive Curriculum
Project Director: David P. Weikart
High/Scope Educational Research Foundation
125 North Huron
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48107

The Behavior Analysis Model
Project Director: Don Bushell, Jr.
Follow Through
Department of Human Development
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

The Open Education Model
Project Director: George E. Hein
Education Development Center
55 Chapel Street
Newton, Massachusetts 02160

The Tucson Early Education Model (TEEM)
Project Director: Ronald Henderson
Arizona Center for Early Childhood Education
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721

The Demonstration and Research Center for Education (DARCEE)
Project Director: Susan W. Gray
Georgia Peabody College for Teachers
Box 151
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

The Bank Street Model
Project Director: Elizabeth Gilkeson
Bank Street College of Education
Follow Through Program
610 West 112th Street
New York, New York 10025

The Responsive Model
Project Director: Glen Nimnicht
Far West Laboratory
Educational Research and Development
1855 Folsom Street
San Francisco, California 94103